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VIRGINIANS @ THE CONGRESS: BWA leaves mark on Honolulu

By Gillian Francis, Caribbean Christian Publications
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Virginia Baptists were hard at work behind the scenes at the 20th Baptist World Congress, enriching the experience of more than 4,000 global Baptists.

HONOLULU -- The more than 4,000 Baptists who attended the Baptist World Congress did more than engage in worship and fellowship -- they also made a difference to the hungry and homeless in Hawaii's capital.



Volunteers prepare some of the 30,000 meals distributed to homeless people in Honolulu. (Photo by Pete Trayham)

Participants prepared about 30,000 meals through Stop Hunger Now, a hunger relief advocacy group.

A portion of the meals, consisting of dehydrated, high-protein and highly-nutritious food, were distributed by the Institute for Human Services, a local homeless shelter, said Dean Miller, who coordinated hands-on mission activities for the World Congress.

The other portion was distributed by Hawaiian Baptist churches, said Miller, who coordinates disaster relief and Virginia missions for Virginia Baptists.

About 240 people volunteered to prepare the meals, he said.

"The IHS serves two meals a day, five days a week to Honolulu's homeless population," said Miller. "We were able to assist in serving three of those meals."

In addition, nearly 800 hygiene kits were packaged by Congress participants and given to the IHS for distribution. Other volunteers sorted clothing and other donated items at the IHS. Another group painted a hallway and stairwell at the homeless shelter.

Ray Buchanan, founder and president of Stop Hunger

Now, emphasized the need for Christians to be the catalyst for change in helping to have a world where hunger no longer exists.

He said he believes being at the BWA Congress makes sense because the church must lead in alleviating hunger, and the Congress provides an opportunity for those attending to actively participate in the movement to have a hunger-free world.

In enlisting volunteers to become a part of the program, volunteers engage in hands-on experience of this mission to the homeless, and Ray suggested it leads to a greater sense of caring.

Gillian Francis is director of Caribbean Christian Publications, a ministry of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.



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